



March 21, 2017

The Honorable Michael Conaway
United States House of Representatives
2430 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

On behalf of the Association of the United States Navy, we would like to pledge our support for H.R. 941, the 12 Carrier Act. This bill will increase the number of operational aircraft carriers of the Navy.

The aircraft carrier can fulfill the Navy's core missions of forward presence, sea control, ensuring safe sea-lanes, and power projection as well as providing flexibility and versatility to execute a wide range of additional missions. Forward airpower is integral to the security and joint forces operations of the United States. Carriers play a central role in delivering forward airpower from sovereign territory of the United States in both permissive and nonpermissive environments. Aircraft carriers provide our Nation the ability to rapidly and decisively respond to national threats, as well as conducting worldwide, on-station diplomacy and providing deterrence against threats to the United States allies, partners, and friends.

Since the end of the cold war, aircraft carrier deployments have increased while the aircraft carrier force structure has declined. Considering the increased array of complex threats across the globe, the Navy aircraft carrier is operating at maximum capacity, increasing deployment lengths and decreasing maintenance periods in order to meet operational requirements. To meet global peacetime and wartime requirements, the Navy has indicated a requirement to maintain two aircraft carriers deployed overseas and have three additional aircraft carrier capable of deploying within 90 days. However, the Navy has indicated that the existing aircraft carrier force structure cannot support these military requirements.

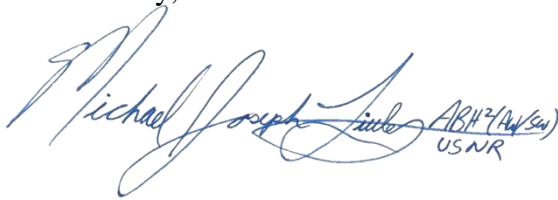
Despite the requirement to maintain an aircraft carrier strike group in both the United States Central Command and United States Pacific Command, the Navy has been unable to generate sufficient capacity to support our combatant commanders and has developed significant carrier gaps in these critical areas. Because of continuing use of a diminished aircraft carrier force structure, extensive maintenance availabilities result, which typically exceed program costs and increase time in shipyards. These expansive maintenance availabilities exacerbate existing carrier gaps.

The Navy has adopted a two-phase acquisition strategy for the U.S.S. John F. Kennedy (CVN-79), an action that will delay the introduction of this aircraft carrier by up to two years, exacerbating existing carrier gaps. Developing an alternative design to the Ford-class aircraft carrier is not cost beneficial. A smaller design is projected to incur significant design and engineering cost while significantly reducing magazine size, carrier air wing size, sortie rate, and

on-station effectiveness among other vital factors when compared to the Ford-class. Furthermore, a new design will delay the introduction of future aircraft carriers, exacerbating existing carrier gaps and threatening the national security of the United States. The 2016 Navy Force Structure Assessment states that the United States should expedite delivery of 12 aircraft carriers, an aircraft carrier should be authorized every three years, and shock trials should be conducted on the U.S.S. John F. Kennedy.

Thank you for taking an active role in such an important issue to the Military and Veteran community by working to improve the lives and careers of those who served our great nation. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at 703-548-5800 or at michael.little@ausn.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Joseph Little". To the right of the signature, there is a handwritten note in blue ink that says "ABH (AW/Sec)" and "USNR" below it.

Michael J. Little
Director of Legislative Affairs